

REMARKS

Claims 19, 20 and 22 have been rejected under USC 102(b) over EPO 299 459 A2 ('459). The ('459) reference discloses a filter element formed of FEP or PFA balloon fiber membranes, the ends of which are bonded with a thermoplastic resin medium potting composition which can be FEP or PFA. Bonding is effected with a one-step heating step wherein the thermoplastic resin medium is heated to its softening temperature and then cooled. The ('459) reference does not disclose or suggest a second step of reheating the thermoplastic resin medium.

In contrast to the ('459) reference, applicants have found that a second reheating step of the potting composition is required to eliminate voids in the potting composition. The claims have been amended to recite that the reheating step for the potting composition results in a potting composition free of voids. Accordingly, this ground of rejection should be withdrawn.

Claims 19, 20 and 22 have been rejected under 35 USC 102 over Niermeyer (U.S. 5,695,702). Niermeyer discloses a filter element formed of hollow fiber membranes of high molecular weight polymers such as polypropylene polyethylene or polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE). Niermeyer does not disclose or suggest the use of hollow fiber membranes formed of a thermoplastic fluoropolymer. PTFE is not thermoplastic. In addition, Niermeyer does not disclose or suggest a step of reheating the potting composition. Accordingly, this ground of rejection should be withdrawn.

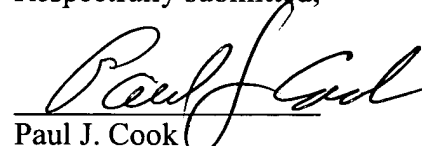
Claims 1-18, 21 and 23 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) over Huang in view of reference ('459). It is the Examiner's position that it would be obvious to use the teaching of ('459) in the teaching of Huang to obtain hollow fiber modules with excellent heat and chemical resistance. The only example given by Huang et al of a fluorine plastic potting material is PTFE. As noted above, PTFE is not thermoplastic. Accordingly, it is submitted that Huang et al. teaches away from applicant's invention. Also, as noted above, reference ('459)

does not suggest a second heating step. Accordingly, this ground of rejection should be withdrawn.

Claim 24-27 has been rejected under 35 USC 103 in view of Huang et al., in view of reference ('459), further in view of Niermeyer. It is the Examiner's position that it would be obvious to use Niermeyer teaching of forming one or more perfluorinated thermoplastic resin steps on the hollow fiber array and then potting around the fiber. These three references are discussed above, none of the references discloses a reheating step as required by applicants. Accordingly, this ground of rejection should be withdrawn.

In view of the above, it is submitted that applicants' claims define patentable subject matter and an early Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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